

**Ford Site Planning Task Force**  
**June 5, 2007, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**  
**St. Kate's Jeanne D'Arc Auditorium**  
**Public Meeting #3 Summary**

Councilmember Patrick Harris began the meeting by highlighting the many opportunities that redevelopment of the Ford site presents. He recognized and thanked the Task Force for their many hours spent discussing goals, concerns and ideas for the site, and emphasized that the site's reuse has the potential to be a bad outcome for the neighborhood if done poorly or a good one if done right. Councilmember Harris then introduced and recognized Mayor Coleman as a champion "for what is right" in planning for redevelopment of the site.

Mayor Coleman thanked Councilmember Harris, and mentioned that Councilmember Harris and others had recently traveled to Denver, Colorado to learn about redevelopment of the 4,500-acre, former Stapleton Airport site. He noted that even though the Ford site is large, it is very manageable in comparison to the huge Stapleton site.

Mayor Coleman talked about a recent Brookings Institute Report that argued that the public sector needs to play a big role in revitalizing urban industrial areas in central cities. He noted that at one time central cities were *the engine* of regional economic growth, and industry was the leader in generating the wealth that would lead to the creation of middle-class neighborhoods, urban parks, and other amenities in cities. The Mayor said that the Ford site is an opportunity to create a physical testament to the history and spirit that shaped this region, perhaps as an incubator for new ways of doing things, whether it is new jobs, or ways to design parks and public spaces, or other innovations. While there is a lot more work to do, he was confident that with public input and great leadership through the Ford Site Planning process, the City will create a site that is a testament to innovation.

Consultant Team Principal Bill Vitek thanked Mayor Coleman and introduced himself, recognizing St. Kate's as an institutional example of great design and collaboration. Vitek stated that our current planning process for the Ford site can respect the past as well as inspire the future. He reviewed the progress made so far, including the two previous large public meetings, and discussed how today's meeting would begin with a presentation of the 5 draft scenarios and follow with a Q & A session.

Vitek reviewed the Task Force's Working Vision Statement, List of Goals, and Fundamental Elements developed at the previous Task Force meetings. He noted that the Consultant Team had also met with adjacent property owners and neighbors for input, and that the City was periodically convening a Technical Advisory Group of inter-agency and organizational representatives with technical expertise to discuss the project. Vitek explained that at the last public meeting one month ago, there were 10 land use themes with a range of land uses and designs, and that based on Task Force and public feedback, the consultant team honed the 10 themes down to 5 scenarios. The next step would be revision of the 5 scenarios based on tonight's feedback and input from two more Task Force meetings. At that point, the final scenarios would proceed into Phase II of the Ford site planning process, undergoing an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) analysis and fiscal analysis, which would take about 8-9 months.

While highlighting the Ford Task Force's Vision Statement, Vitek talked about how the Stapleton site in Denver became an urban model of redevelopment precisely because civic and political leaders, landowners, and the public developed a shared vision. He hoped that 10 years from now, people in our community would look back at how the Ford site redeveloped and be able to say "we made it happen." One of the key emphases of the Task Force's Ford Site Vision is to seek a balance between economic, environmental, and social sustainability, and improve the qualities of the neighborhood. Several proposed working goal categories that support the vision include a mix of land uses,

economic viability for Ford and the future landowner, consistency with City policies, sustainability, and transport connectivity.

Vitek moved to describing the 5 draft scenarios:

Scenario #1 (the land use baseline) proposes the site stays as a predominantly industrial use (as required by the AUAR, one of the scenarios tested includes land uses that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan). Some of the existing Albert Kahn assembly building remains for reuse, with additional new industrial pad sites. The CP rail corridor is retained for heavy rail to serve the industrial uses. Two to three story retail buildings are added along Ford Parkway with office above. Three road connections to Mississippi River Boulevard (MRB) are envisioned for vehicular and truck access to the industrial properties. Vitek said that semi-trailer use of MRB could be restricted, as it currently is.

Scenario #2 proposes a Mixed Use – Light Industrial / Flex Tech site, in which a balance of light industrial (45 acres) is included, serviced by a Cretin to Montreal road connection. The rail corridor becomes an on-grade road connection for traffic alleviation, which does not preclude light rail along it later. Retail / Office spaces are added on Ford Parkway, and the scenario includes a mixture of residential, from single family detached homes to medium density townhomes and apartments/condos. Vitek noted that the “next generation worker” is more typically looking for housing near the workplace. He said that structured parking is key to this site’s redevelopment, given that it is valuable land, and is important to adjacent property owners.

Scenario #3 envisions a Mixed Use site, with an emphasis on Office / Institutional uses. The office space might be occupied principally by a corporate user and potentially include R & D onsite. It is not envisioned as predominantly a warehouse/distribution center. A plaza is included around which the office and housing are situated, and it serves as a place for a transit stop along the CP corridor reused for transit. Retail is included along Ford Parkway. Several connections to MRB are included with a series of boulevards.

Scenario #4 is a Mixed Use Urban Village. This scenario includes more retail along Ford Parkway and more lower and medium density housing. A road connection south of Lunds shopping center is envisioned with shared parking to serve the existing and new uses. The rail corridor is proposed as a greenway/trail—which did not sit well with TF members, who liked to see it preserved for either transit or a road in the future. Another TF member stated that this scenario takes a unique space and breaks it up into a lot of single family lots – losing its appeal.

Scenario #5 is a High Density Urban Transit Village. More open space (44% of the site) is included as a trade-off for the increased density of housing and nonresidential uses. The CP rail corridor becomes a transit corridor, with structured parking located below the office and residential point towers. Vitek said that at this point it was important to determine whether 44% of the site is the right percentage of the site to be depicted for open space.

## **Comments and Questions**

*(stated at the meeting or submitted on comment cards)*

### Comments

#### **General**

- You mention the legacy of Ford. Is that the closure at the expense of 30k jobs? The city and state have a moral imperative to take over the Ford Plant and support its public ownership.
- The sale of the power plant is regrettable and indicates the lack of understanding of its importance for the site.

- One group not represented here [at the public meeting] is the kids – they are our future – consider what do they'd want here. Consider significantly more active ball fields of varying types for the site, such as soccer, and open space. We don't need 200 houses.
- Active recreation space is more than baseball, it includes other sports too.
- Where will people find replacement jobs?
- Want to sell 2-story home and find something here to downsize to – empty nester.
- 'Reuse' is a cornerstone of sustainability.
- "Do more of what's working and less of what's not working". These scenarios are trying to do way too much. Just extend the grid of the existing neighborhood.
- Show housing, not office, on the site.
- A great thing about the site is that it's along the river – there needs to be more creativity related to the strip right along the river.
- Need family sustaining, family supporting jobs in the reuse of this site.
- The City needs to be thinking about 'carbon mitigation' planning in the redevelopment of the site; looking to the future...energy/ carbon load, housing, density, transit.
- Use rail corridor for transit. Include a park-n-ride location with high density served by transit.
- There is a shortage of football fields Citywide, add some at the site.
- If this site goes high density, I will move out of the neighborhood.
- Large number of jobs and high density would stress this area.
- The silence of the governor on the issue of retaining jobs at this site is bad. The state should be more vocal and involved.
- #3 and #5 have high density supported by rail transit, to be extended to Minneapolis and the airport. #1 and #2 keep heavy rail to support industrial competitive advantages.
- Ford should learn from the West publishing story and give its property to the City.
- What about home based business incubators? Located in home office -- zero commute is an affordable start up.
- Light rail is not logical for Highland; it's better suited to University. Cost to bring Light Rail Transit [LRT] across the river?
- Limit heights to 4 stories.
- People on Finn, Colby and Bowdoin need a peaceful night without a train.
- If train can be used as Ford used it, which has kept a lid on truck traffic going thru the area, then that should be pursued. If not, be careful about using commuter train, LRT, or Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] in that corridor because of the impact on homes along Collette and Return Court – they'd pay the price and probably not benefit from the service that would benefit, possibly, residents north of Ford Pkwy.
- New open areas / park space do not need to have water features, because we already have the Mississippi River.
- Setback on Mississippi River Blvd [MRB] needs to be greater than shown. Space should be left for bike trails and sidewalks.
- Sidewalks are very important for the neighborhood. Sidewalks should be everywhere.
- Make multi-modal transit system front and center and build everything around it. Highland residents will all benefit from increased access and options, and the reduced impact from traffic that any development will bring.

- MnSCU must stay.
- Mixed use please. Need exterior mall with retail, free of cars. Excelsior and Grand is an excellent model – beautiful, attractive housing, pedestrian friendly, and park with open space.
- Expand transit options.
- Expand green space – mini squares and town parks.
- Like retail on Ford Parkway, it's good to expand that.
- Good mix of attached housing to serve seniors who live in area and want to move out of their current homes but stay in the area. Edina suburb has done a great job of keeping their seniors in the community.
- Enhance river view access – how about a plaza overlooking river or terrace with coffee shop and restaurants – make it public and open access, not just a car park lookout that is already along MRB.
- Accessibility issues – need residences with basement and main floor, larger doorways, no stairs, and lower countertops.
- Can you do more to preserve the historic Albert Kahn building; not just the showroom, but the assembly plant as well? Save it for these reasons: It preserves the “legacy” of the Ford Motor Co.; marvelous neo-classical facades have far more integrity than anything contemporary developers will provide; the amazing sky-lit assembly plant is a space that rivals many great European train stations; reuse is the cornerstone of sustainability (in the basis of your Vision statement); reuse need not be limited to industrial reuse, it could be residential, possible LRT/BRT station lined with retail, office and industrial incubator space. If you do demolish this historic treasure, have the decency to take its photo off the cover of your document – it's disingenuous.
- There is nothing in St. Paul for retirees who want to live in a community of one level housing. We live in Shadow Falls – great neighborhood – and would like to see that created on the site. There should be townhomes, twinhomes and condos with most of the living space on 1 level (maybe guest quarters in the basement), a small patio or yard, and sidewalks. They should be well built and designed so people can stay even if mobility isn't perfect. Not too small! In 5 years, people will be retiring and moving to the suburbs because there are no options for us like this in St. Paul. There are a lot of us! Please, no low-income rentals unless it is for seniors. And nothing that generates a lot of noise. We also don't want to live in a home that looks like a warehouse, like some of the new lofts. We also want a quiet street! When can we reserve our home?
- I think what this neighborhood needs is: more structured parking; more starter homes; more economic and racial diversity; somewhat higher density, say maybe another high rise; transit; environmental sustainability; and more space along MRB for trails.
- Whatever happens – for the love of all that is good – don't let curvy suburban style roads come into St. Paul. Extend the grid, build alleys, etc.
- The 5 Draft Scenarios project 12,000-27,000 additional daily trips, meaning perimeter collectors will add thousands of vehicles, probably mostly at peak. Consultant guestimates 5-10% transit mode share based in similar sites elsewhere. It seems to me this level of transportation impact strongly suggests policies to discourage SOV and encourage walking, biking and transit, regardless of the choice of scenario.
- The beauty of including light industry in the mix is that it's already there.
- The idea of light rail on the site is a good one.

## Draft Scenario 1

- Too industrial along the river. Don't like anything about this one.
- You are allowing for too much industrial along one of the most beautiful sites in St. Paul.
- No! Too industrial – industrial should not be near river. Not enough retail or housing.

### **Draft Scenario 2**

- Don't want large parkway where the railroad tracks are currently located.
- Like single family along the river.
- Better than #1. Not enough retail and too much single family.
- Needs transit line, not more roads.
- Too many road openings to MRB.
- Uses roundabouts / traffic circles, which is good. The need to control traffic flow and avoid speeding is critical. Use as many roundabouts as possible, most versions don't have them.

### **Draft Scenario 3**

- Light rail into Highland doesn't make sense.
- Good overall. Like the “central” station with a park.
- Transit corridor good. Fewer curb cuts to MRB good.
- Needs more retail, but good mix of housing.
- Prefer this version of LRT because it feeds into Cretin, a more major road than Mt. Curve.
- Best scenario so far; good mix of residential types and retail.

### **Draft Scenario 4**

- Don't move current ballfield location.
- My favorite – consistent with existing character of Highland.
- Neighbors on Bowdoin favor Scenario 4.
- Like the LRT.
- Too much housing and single family, not enough retail or jobs.
- Boring – too many single family homes which contribute to lawn runoff into the river.
- I'd like a blend of the #4 and #5.

### **Draft Scenario 5**

- Keep high density off the river, but retain it along Cleveland.
- Park at corner of Ford and River Road is nice.
- How high are the towers in draft scenario #5?
- I like the plan, but the neighbors of Bowdoin strongly oppose light rail coming to this neighborhood.
- Like the transit. Don't need 5 roads opening to MRB.
- Like the open space and mix.
- Needs more retail.
- Would like a plaza at the NW corner on Ford and MRB.

- Like this one best since it integrates all needs and uses.
- High density scenario #5 goes too far. The middle scenarios are better.

### Questions

1. Will the AUAR address cumulative impacts to the surrounding river area? Make sure the visual / scenic resources and impacts are addressed in the Phase II analysis.
2. How actively are Ford and the City looking for a new user for the existing site and for green industries?
3. What will be the impacts of various scenarios on the neighborhood as far as traffic, crime, noise and air pollution, etc.?
4. What happens to the properties west of MRB – the ‘white blob’, steam plant and tunnels?
5. How much more traffic can be added to the area, it’s already congested?
6. Will the Port Authority be involved in the planning and redevelopment of the site?
7. How much ‘say’ will close by neighbors have on what happens at the site?
8. Will these scenarios force a developer into a box to choose one?
9. Light industrial, flex, etc. - Ford operates without a lot of truck traffic now. Would new light industrial here be competitive or accessible?
10. What ideas for beauty are being considered?
11. What are the past practices at places like ??east that have been abandoned years earlier by Ford manufacturing (like Edison, New Jersey)? I think public ownership looks like an advantage.
12. What is being proposed to reduce traffic nightmare along Ford Pkwy? Will there be right turn only onto Ford? How many entrances onto Ford are being proposed? I’m concerned about having yet more retail along Ford Pkwy.
13. In Draft Scenario #4, about how many single-family homes and/or medium density units would be built? Would smaller shops be allowed within these neighborhoods to lower traffic onto Cleveland/Ford and to keep the Highland Park feel?
14. Will the residences receive some electrical from the old Ford hydro plant?
15. What are the possibilities for bus and/or LRT?
16. In most or all schemes, maps show 4 or 5 streets emptying onto MRB and a small, winding parkway. How will this effect traffic? Will it require stop signs or stoplights? How will it effect bicyclists? How can these be reduced or eliminated to keep the parkway quiet, safe and peaceful? Also, how can green space buffer be increased between the boulevard and any new residential?
17. What is the future – your long-range prediction – of keeping heavy rail corridor in place?
18. Has City considered an LRT commuter junction from Ford site west to Hiawatha line 46<sup>th</sup> St stop in Minneapolis, and then east to downtown St. Paul Union Depot and the Central Corridor LRT line?
19. What levels of affordable housing will be located on this site? Will service sector and retail employees earning “entry level” wages be able to live here?
20. Why are we not talking about the parcel of land west of the River Road, currently being used to park vehicles near the river? Why is this separated from the discussion? When will reuse of this area be considered?
21. I see a lot of scenarios have residential areas by the river. Are there plans for controlling storm water and non-point pollution?

22. As you think about sustainability, are you taking into consideration the impact of residential housing? The higher the density, the less environmental impact and the better social impact sometimes.
23. What holds a developer to anything more than broad zoning guidelines?
24. Could the parking be redesigned around the SW corner of Ford Parkway and Cleveland even though it's not included within the Ford site?
25. Have traffic calming measures been considered for the residential areas?
26. In addition to number of jobs for each scenario, how many cars and how many people will they add?
27. How much extra traffic will each scenario add? Compare to current traffic with the plant.
28. How will existing Highland Village traffic flow be affected by each scenario?
29. How will you keep all these new cars off existing neighborhood residential streets?